THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) Eligibility certificate was issued for treatment abroad in respect of three Union Ministers of the last financial year. For Governors and Ministers of the State Government, the concerned State Government gives the permission for treatment abroad.

(b) and (c) An amount of Rs. 75,90,759 in Indian Rupees and £ 54,885.88 in foreign currency was released from the Central Exchaquer for this purpose.

(d) Eligibility certificate for treatment abroad is issued on the recommendations of a Standing Committee, which examines the views of relevant specialists from leading hospitals in India and satisfies itself that treatment abroad is necessary in the circumstances of each individual case.

Linking of Rivers

2341. SHRI JAYSINH CHAUHAN : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have constituted a team of experts for the project of connecting the rivers with another and constructing dams on rivers in order to utilise the water for electricity generation and other purposes besides irrigation;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which the report of the team is likely to be submitted?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A National Commission has been set up by the Ministry of Water Resources vide O.M. dt. 13.9.1996 and subsequent modification dt. 25.10.1996, 22.11.1996 and 14.2.1997. Dr. S.R. Hashim, Member, Planning Commission is the Chairman of the Commission.

The terms of reference of the Commission are as under :

(i) To prepare an Integrated Water Plan for development of water resources for Drinking, Irrigation, Industrial, Flood Control and other uses;

(ii) To suggest modalities for transfer of surplus water to water deficit basin by inter-linking of rivers for achieving the above objectives;

(iii) To identify important On-going Projects as well as New Projects which should be completed on priority basis together with phasing;

(iv) Identify a technological and interdisciplinary research plan for the water sector with a view to maximise the benefits;

(v) To suggest physical and financial resources generation strategies for the water sector;

(vi) Any other related issue;

(c) The report is likely to be submitted in two years time.

[English]

Chakma Refugees

2342. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether during the recent visit of Prime Minister to Dhaka, Chakma refugees problem was discussed;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Bangladesh Government has agreed to accept back the Chakma refugees taking shelter in the country; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) to (d) The issue of repatriation of Chakma refugees was discussed during the visit of Prime Minister to Dhaka from January 6-7, 1997. In response to a suggestion from India, the Government of Bangladesh had indicated that a delegation including Members of Parliament from Chittagong Hill Tracts area in Bangladesh would visit Chakma refugee camps in Tripura and encourage the refugees to return to Bangladesh. Accordingly a 13-member Bangladeshi delegation led by Chief Whip of Bangladesh Parliament visited Tripura from February 27 to March 2, 1997. The delegation visited the refugee camps in Tripura and had meetings with the Governor of Tripura, Chief Minister of Tripura and the Chakma refugee leaders.

[Translation]

Bridges on NH-16

2343. SHRI MAHENDRA KARMA : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to construct bridges/culverts on National Highways No. 16;

(b) if so, the details with locations thereof; and

(c) the time by which these are likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Bridges and culverts planned to be constructed/under construction along NH-16 are as per